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Research was concerned with determining mobility and situational factors linked to the behavior and attitudes of job-displaced workers, and examining the influence of each variable in explaining the social consequences of unemployment. Data were derived from interviews with 260 white, blue-collar respondents from a larger random sample of former employees of an automobile manufacturing plant which closed operations in 1956. The interviews were conducted in 1958, about 27 months after the shutdown. The major components of adjustment to job displacement selected as dependent variables were: (1) personal alienation as measured by a seven-item version of the Srole Anomia Scale, (2) satisfaction with life as measured by a four-item scale, and (3) social participation as measured by contact with relatives and friends. Independent variables were age, education, skill level, unemployment status, number of months of unemployment, degree of economic deprivation, and the amount of variance explained by each combination of five at a time. Data indicated that the situational factor (the degree of economic deprivation) was more important than the mobility factor (post-displacement job pattern) in shaping the attitudes and behavior of displaced workers. Economic deprivation was more productive of alienatory attitudes and behavior (anomia, dissatisfaction with life, and withdrawal from human contacts) than job mobility. (ET)

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Mobility and Situational Factors in the Adjustment of Older Workers to Job Displacement

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RESEARCH ON UNEMPLOYMENT in the United States has focused mainly on a description of the economic and social consequences resulting from the loss of work.[1] Few attempts have been made to relate these consequences to mobility and situational variables associated with unemployment and reemployment experiences.[2] In a phenomenon as complex as unemployment, it is indeed an extensive task to trace the linkages between these variables and their consequences, much less to assign a measure of relative influence to mobility or situational factors. Empirical research on unemployment, however, contains a number of assumptions about these variables and their relationship to the social and psychological consequences of the loss of work. It is the purpose of this paper to report on research that was primarily concerned with (1) a determination of mobility and situational factors linked to the behavior and attitudes of job-displaced workers, and (2) an examination of the unique influence of each variable in explaining the social consequences of unemployment.

The use of mobility and situational factors as determinants of social behavior reflects two quite different traditions of data analysis in sociological research. As Janowitz has stated, "Mobility variables refer to the movement of individuals from one stratum to another or shifts in the relative size and position of whole strata in social groups."[3] Following the direction of Durkheim's research on suicide, students have attempted to trace the specific psychological and social outcomes of such changes.[4] The crucial assumption in this schema is that social mobility requires the individual to rationalize his status change both psychologically (the use of coping mechanisms)[5] and socially (the adoption of new ideologies and styles of life).[6] In contrast, the situational approach places little emphasis on the individual's developmental or social history and emphasizes the adjustment to strains and stresses inherent in his immediate social situation.[7] These two traditions are not operationally discrete; in any specific research, some attention is paid to both sets of variables and an attempt is usually made to clarify their interaction effects.

Method

This report is based on interviews made in 1958 with former employees of the Packard Motor Company which had closed its Detroit operations in

1956. A ten percent random sample was drawn from the 4,012 employees still working at the Packard Motor Car Company on June 1, 1956, shortly before the shutdown. Three hundred and fourteen completed interviews were drawn from the 400 workers selected in the sample, yielding a completion rate of 78 percent. Most non-interviews resulted from refusals or from inability to contact persons who had moved from the Detroit area, or who were ill, institutionalized, or dead.[8]

The respondents were interviewed approximately 27 months after the plant shutdown. Interviewers obtained a complete job history of the respondents' post-displacement experience, including skill level and wages earned in subsequent jobs. In addition, they asked a series of questions concerning political and social attitudes as well as the frequency of informal social participation of each former Packard worker in the sample.

This report is based on interviews with the 260 white, blue-collar respondents in the larger sample. Interviews with Negro workers and a small number of white-collar employees were eliminated since there were not enough cases to permit adequate comparisons among these subgroups.

More than nine out of ten of the workers included in this report were 40 years of age or older; approximately 35 percent were at least 60 years of age. Almost one-half had over 26 years of service; five percent had worked at Packard since 1915. The workers in this report represented various blue-collar levels of occupation in the automotive industry.

Job Mobility Measure

The number of months of joblessness during the post-displacement period is only one way in which to characterize the experiences of these displaced workers. While it is important, it has some shortcomings: for example, it tells us nothing about the employment history of the displaced worker. Did he find a job and did he keep it? Or did he find a job only to lose it? Actually, measures of the employment history which reflect such experiences may be more sensitive indicators of the worker's adjustment to the displacement experience since they provide us with some understanding of changes in his situation following the shutdown. Therefore, we constructed the following categories in an attempt to reflect this aspect of the post-displacement mobility experience:

Never reemployed. This category included all workers who were unable to get a job during the post-displacement experience. If a worker found a job but kept it for less than one month, he was included in this category.

Reemployed, but not working now. This category included all workers who were able to obtain either a full-time or part-time job that lasted for at least a month, but who were jobless at the time of the interview. In this sense, these workers were at least "two-time losers" since they had lost at least two jobs during a relatively short period of time. Some of these workers had lost even more than two jobs.[9]

Reemployed, and still working. This category included workers who found new employment after the shutdown and who were still working at the time of our interview. This does not mean that they had experienced no unemployment. On the contrary, a worker in this category may have had many months of unemployment; but he had managed to get a job by the time of the interview.

Only 45 percent of our respondents were in the latter category. Of the others, 23 percent were never reemployed and 32 percent had found a job but lost it. The average number of months of unemployment of the workers who were never reemployed was 21.4 (see Table 1). Since the Packard Company phased out workers at different intervals during the post-displacement experience, this group of never reemployed workers averaged fewer than 27 months without jobs. The two-time losers (workers who found jobs but subsequently lost them) averaged approximately ten months of unemployment, while those who were still working when we interviewed them averaged five months in the unemployment ranks.

TABLE 1. MONTHS OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOLLOWING PLANT SHUTDOWN, BY MOBILITY PROFILE OF POST-DISPLACEMENT EXPERIENCE

Unemployment Experience	*Mean*	*N*
Never Reemployed	21.35	60
Reemployed, not working now	9.67	82
Reemployed, still working	5.13	118
All Respondents	10.30	260

Economic Deprivation Measure

Intensive analysis of pretest worker profiles combined with interviewer observations suggested that at the time of the interview the workers' situations

were characterized by differing degrees of economic privation or loss of economic integrity.

The concept of economic deprivation has been measured in various ways. Pope was concerned, for example, with a working profile of economic loss and indexed economic deprivation by the number of months of unemployment in the worker's career.[10] Street and Leggett, emphasizing the situational dimension, used the employment status of the respondent—working or not working—as a measure of economic stress.[11] It is apparent, however, that *situational economic stress most closely reflects the availability to the worker of economic resources.* The availability or lack of availability of such resources is a function not *only* of employment status but of other factors as well, such as earnings of other members of his family, eligibility for pension or transfer payments, and income from property. To get some approximation of the *situational strains and stresses* felt by the worker at the time of the interview, the following questions were asked:

1. As far as savings are concerned, would you say you are better off than you were a year ago, worse off, or about the same?
2. As far as debts are concerned, do you owe *more* or *less* right now than you did when you were working for Packard?
3. While you were out of work, you were getting less money. That probably meant that you had to cut down on things. What sort of things *did* you have to spend less money on? Would you say that food was one of the things you had to cut down on? How about clothing?

Based on the responses to these questions, an Index of Economic Deprivation was constructed. This Index of Economic Deprivation utilized a scoring procedure which gave a high score to a respondent who reported that his savings had declined since leaving the company, that his debts had increased, and that it was necessary for him to cut down on at least two types of expenditures for such things as food, clothing, house repairs, medical care, recreation, and transportation. Conversely, a respondent who reported more savings, less debts, and no cutback on expenditures was given a low score. The relationship of each item to the over-all index, expressed as a Pearsonian correlation coefficient, is as follows:

Cutback on two expenditures since being laid off	.75
Savings are less since being laid off	.69
Debts are more since being laid off	.54

Findings

What is the relationship between job mobility, economic deprivation, and psychological state of the worker? What is the relative influence of mobility and situation on these dependent variables? From the wide range of social and psychological consequences that may characterize the unemployment situation, we selected three which seemed to be major components of an individual's adjustment to job displacement: *personal alienation* as measured by a seven-item version of the Srole Anomia Scale,[12] *satisfaction with life* as measured by a four-item scale,[13] and *social participation* as measured by contact with relatives and friends.[14]

MOBILITY AND SITUATIONAL INFLUENCE ON ANOMIA AND SATISFACTION WITH LIFE. To test the relative strength of the mobility and situational factors in explaining adjustment to the unemployment experience, we employed the technique of determining the amount of explained variance in each dependent variable that is uniquely attributable to each independent variable. This was done by determining the amount of variance in each dependent variable explained by all six factors—age, education, skill level, unemployment status, number of months of unemployment, and degree of economic deprivation —and the amount of variance explained by each combination of five at a time. The difference in the amount of variance explained by the set of six variables and any given subset of five variables is the unique contribution of the variable omitted from the subset.

Table 2 indicates that the degree of economic deprivation makes the greatest unique contribution in explaining the anomia.[15] That is, all six variables shown in Table 2 explain 10.1 percent of the variance in anomia. That is, it adds an additional 3.57 economic deprivation, accounts for only 6.53 percent of the variance in the index of anomia. Thus, for this set of variables, economic deprivation uniquely accounts for 3.57 percent of the variance in anomia. That is, it adds an additional 3.57 percent of explained variance after all the other variables have explained all they can. No other variable makes a unique contribution of more than .75 percent. These data suggest that a sense of personal estrangement (or anomia) was not a direct consequence of the mobility experience in the labor market, but varied with the availability of economic resources. In other words, the effect of mobility

experiences in the labor market was offset by the degree of access to financial resources. The mobility experience was not independent of economic deprivation, however, for the two variables were significantly related to each other (.001). Workers who found a new job, only to lose it, had the highest economic deprivation scores, while workers who found a new job and remained reemployed had the lower scores.

The following causal link is suggested. Certain mobility experiences lead to economic deprivation which, in turn, produces varying degrees of anomia. This is not to say that the sum total of economic deprivation is solely a product of the worker's job mobility. Undoubtedly, some deprivation results from other factors: the availability of alternative sources of money from kin, the number of wage earners in the family, past savings, and budgeting habits. However, job mobility patterns after the shutdown contributed to the level of economic deprivation of these workers.

The data in Table 3 are consistent with the observations in Table 2. The Index of Economic Deprivation makes the greatest independent contribution in explaining the degree of satisfaction with life. It uniquely attributes 2.95 percent of explained variance. Both the age of workers and the amount of education makes significant contributions to the explanation of this measure, but neither makes as great a contribution as the Index of Economic Deprivation. The mobility variable was a relatively weak predictor. Workers with low economic depriva-

TABLE 2. UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN EXPLAINING INDEX OF ANOMIA

Age	Eduation	Skill Level	Unemployment Status	Number of Months Unemployed	Economic Deprivation	R^2	Additional Variance Explained By
X	X	X	X	X	X	10.10	
	X	X	X	X	X	9.98	.12†
X		X	X	X	X	9.36	.74†
X	X		X	X	X	9.39	.71†
X	X	X		X	X	9.37	.73†
X	X	X	X		X	9.68	.42†
X	X	X	X	X		6.53	3.57**

† Not Significant
** Significant at the .01 level

TABLE 3. UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN EXPLAINING INDEX OF SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

Age	Eduation	Skill Level	Unemployment Status	Number of Months Unemployed	Economic Deprivation	R^2	Additional Variance Explained By
X	X	X	X	X	X	11.34	
	X	X	X	X	X	9.82	1.52*
X		X	X	X	X	10.91	.43†
X	X		X	X	X	9.62	1.72*
X	X	X		X	X	10.32	1.02†
X	X	X	X		X	10.50	.84†
X	X	X	X	X		8.39	2.95**

† Not Significant
* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
** Significant at the .01 level of confidence

tion had high scores on the Index of Satisfaction with Life, regardless of the post-displacement mobility pattern.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION WITH RELATIVES AND FRIENDS. The data in Table 5 indicate that economic deprivation also makes the greatest unique contribution in explaining the frequency of visiting relatives, although this contribution is not statistically significant. The mobility variable together with the number of months of unemployment, are the weakest predictors. Although economic deprivation was not significantly related to social participation with relatives, the trend was for respondents with high economic deprivation to have had a lower frequency of social participation with relatives, regardless of their mobility patterns.

The data on contact with friends (Table 5) are consistent with our observations about contact with relatives. The variable that makes the greatest unique contribution to the explanation of visiting friends is economic deprivation. The mobility variable does not significantly contribute to the explanation of visiting rates with friends. Respondents with high economic deprivation scores were more likely than others to have had a low frequency of social participation with friends, regardless of their mobility patterns.

Interpretation Of Findings

Our data show that the situational factor (the degree of economic deprivation) was more important than the mobility factor (post-displacement job pattern) in shaping the attitudes and behavior

TABLE 4. UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN EXPLAINING FREQUENCY OF VISITING RELATIVES

Age	Eduation	Skill Level	Unemployment Status	Number of Months Unemployed	Economic Deprivation	R^2	Additional Variance Explained By
X	X	X	X	X	X	3.86	
	X	X	X	X	X	3.16	.70†
X		X	X	X	X	3.18	.68†
X	X		X	X	X	3.41	.45†
X	X	X		X	X	3.54	.32†
X	X	X	X		X	3.53	.33†
X	X	X	X	X		2.65	1.21†

† Not Significant

TABLE 5. UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION OF SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN EXPLAINING FREQUENCY OF VISITING OTHER FRIENDS

Age	Eduation	Skill Level	Unemployment Status	Number of Months Unemployed	Economic Deprivation	R^2	Additional Variance Explained By
X	X	X	X	X	X	6.29	
	X	X	X	X	X	6.05	.24†
X		X	X	X	X	6.07	.22†
X	X		X	X	X	5.01	1.28†
X	X	X		X	X	5.53	.76†
X	X	X	X		X	5.35	.94†
X	X	X	X	X		4.50	1.79•

† Not Significant
• Significant at the .05 level

of displaced workers. Economic deprivation was more productive of alienatory attitudes and behavior (anomia, dissatisfaction with life, and withdrawal from contact with kin and friends) than job mobility. *It is the absence or presence of financial strains that shapes the displaced worker's outlook on life and social participation, not the tragedies of his past work history.*

It is interesting to examine these findings in the light of Durkheim's hypothesis about the relationship between social mobility and consequent social posture of the individual. Durkheim postulated a direct relationship between the sudden and frequent status changes inherent in mobility experiences and consequent social malaise and disorientation of the individual. His followers have largely accepted this hypothesis and have given little thought to the role of situational variables in inhibiting the consequences of sudden status changes. Janowitz has raised a question about the role of primary and secondary group structures in modifying the consequences of social mobility[16] and Kornhauser has analyzed the importance of these group variables in social mobility and status change.[17]

Our findings suggest that another dimension of the worker's situation is an important factor in the modification of the consequences of mobility; namely, the degree of economic deprivation. It is likely that the number and intensity of group memberships and social contacts are directly related to the worker's financial resources. Many primary group activities with kin and friends demand material or social reciprocity which is dependent on the availability of financial resources. Lack of finances may also lead to exclusion from secondary groups (e.g., the lodge, church membership, the neighborhood clubhouse). The exact nature of the interaction is not clear without further study, but our data suggest that a lack of financial resources may affect social ties in two possible ways. First, economic deprivation may produce reactions of anomia (or alienation) and these psychic states place severe limitations on social interaction. Reduced interactions may well produce more intense anomia and further weaken the individual's social ties. Second, the lack of financial resources may severely restrict access to various forms of group life, which may lead to further economic as well as social isolation.

It is not change in itself that triggers attitudinal and behavioral reactions but rather the significance given to these changes by dimensions of the worker's immediate situation (e.g., economic deprivation). Changes in jobs, positive or negative, may be a minor influence on the worker's life if he continues to exercise some control over his social environment. This control is accomplished partially through the availability of economic resources. It may very well be that it is necessary to reexamine the Durkheim hypothesis and further specify the conditions under which the effects of mobility may be modified.

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5. Bettelheim and Janowitz, *op. cit.*
6. Harold Wilensky and Hugh Edwards, "The Skidder: Ideological Adjustment of Downward Mobile Workers," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 24, April 1959, pp. 216-231.
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Chinese communists. Cf., E. P. Schein, *et al., Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-Psychological Analysis of the Brainmunists,* Norton, New York, 1961; also Edgar H. Schein, *munists, Norton,* New York, 1961; also Edgar H. Schein, "The Chinese Indoctrination Program for Prisoners of War: A Study of Attempted 'Brainwashing,'" in Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb and Eugene L. Hartley (eds.) *Readings in Social Psychology,* Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1958, pp. 311-334. A general discussion of environmental and situational stress factors in the shaping of human behavior is found in Alexander Leighton, *My Name Is Legion,* Basic Books, New York, 1959.

8. See Harold L. Sheppard, Louis A. Ferman, and Seymour Faber, *Too Old To Work, Too Young To Retire: A Case Study of a Permanent Plant Shutdown,* U.S. Senate Special Committee on Unemployment Problems, 1960, pp. 71-74, for additional details on the sampling procedures and completion rates.
9. Fifty-six of the reemployed workers had lost one job, while 24 had lost two jobs without finding another. Two workers had lost three or more jobs without finding new employment.
10. Pope, *op cit.*
11. Street and Leggett, *op. cit.*
12. The Srole Anomia Scale was constructed as follows. The Anomia Index was obtained by assigning one point for each of the items below to which respondents gave a positive response. The relationship of each item to the overall Index of Anomia is shown in the table.

Index of Anomia	Pearsonian Correlation Coefficient
1. "No one is going to care much about what happens to you when you get right down to it."	.75
2. "You sometimes can't help wondering whether life is worthwhile any more."	.68
3. "In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better."	.67
4. "These days I get a feeling that I'm just not a part of things."	.67
5. "Most people don't really care what happens to the next fellow."	.66
6. "It is hardly fair to bring a child into the world today, the way things look now."	.65
7. "These days a person doesn't really know whom he can depend on."	.64

There is considerable confusion in the sociological literature about the meaning of the concepts anomia and alienation. Durkheim used the former concept to refer to an *objective* condition of society—a state of normlessness. Marx, on the other hand, discussed alienation both as objective (alienation from the process and means of production) and subjective (alienation from self and from fellow workers). See T. B. Bottomore (ed.), *Karl Marx: Early Writings,* McGraw-Hill, New York, 1963, pp. 120-134. Most empirical research on the concept of anomia has used it in a social psychological sense. Cf. Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries: An Exploratory Study," *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 21, December 1956, pp. 709-716. We agree with Mizruchi's recent suggestion that the empirical uses of anomia and alienation are equivalent; therefore, we use them interchangeably in this study. See Ephraim H. Mizruchi, *Success and Opportunity,* The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1964.

13. The Index of Satisfaction with Life was designed to measure a mental posture of general happiness and satisfaction with everyday life. The index gave a high score to respondents who provided a positive response to the four items below and a low score to respondents who gave a negative response. The relationship of each item to the overall index is as follows:

Index of Satisfaction with Life	Pearsonian Correlation Coefficient
1. Find a good deal of happiness in life.	.76
2. Very satisfied with life.	.76
3. Hardly ever or never get the feeling that life is not useful.	.75
4. Generally feel in good spirits most of the time.	.61

As could be anticipated, the two measures of emotional adjustment (the Index of Anomie and the Index of Satisfaction with Life) are highly related to each other. The correlation coefficient between these two measures is −.49, indicating that a worker who is highly satisfied with life is less prone to have feelings of anomia, and *vice versa.*

14. The ex-Packard respondents were asked a series of questions about their social participation with relatives, neighbors, and friends just prior to the shutdown and whether these contacts had increased, decreased, or remained the same following the closing of the plant. Measures of high and low social participation were constructed. Individuals with high social participation were defined as those who reported seeing relatives or friends at least once every two weeks before the plant shut down and who reported visiting them with the same or greater frequency after the plant closed. All others were considered to have low frequency of social participation.
15. The statistics reported here were generated by the Multiple Classification Analysis program. This program treats each category of each explanatory variable as a dummy variable in generating the statistic R^2. For a detailed discussion of this statistical technique, see James N. Morgan, *et. al., Income and Wealth in the United States,* McGraw-Hill, New York, 1962, Appendix E, "Multivariate Analysis;" Donald C. Pelz and Frank M. Andrews, "The SRC Computer Program for Multivariate Analysis: Some Uses and Limitations," (dittoed draft of the Survey Research Center, The University of Michigan, September 30, 1961); Irene Hess and R. K. Pillai, "Multiple Classification Analysis," (dittoed draft of the Survey Research Center, The University of Michigan, November, 1960); and Daniel Suits, "Use of Dummy Variable in Regression Equations," *Journal of the American Statistical Association,* Vol. 52, December 1957, pp. 548-551.
16. Janowitz, *op. cit.*
17. William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society,* The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, 1959, pp. 159-167.

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